



# Cities in Motion: Urban Life and Cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia, 1920-1940 (Asian Connections)

*Su Lin Lewis*

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In the 1920s and 1930s, the port-cities of Southeast Asia were staging grounds for diverse groups of ordinary citizens to experiment with modernity, as a rising Japan and American capitalism challenged the predominance of European empires after the First World War. Both migrants and locals played a pivotal role in shaping civic culture. Moving away from a nationalist reading of the period, Su Lin Lewis explores layers of cross-cultural interaction in various spheres: the urban built environment, civic associations, print media, education, popular culture and the emergence of the modern woman. While the book focuses on Penang, Rangoon and Bangkok - three cities born amidst British expansion to the region - it explores connected experiences across Asia and in Asian intellectual enclaves in Europe. Cosmopolitan sensibilities were severely tested in the era of post-colonial nationalism, but are undergoing a resurgence in Southeast Asia's civil society and creative class today.

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